

# Kansas Facts

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## State Capitol

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The Kansas Capitol in Topeka is one of the most beautiful State Capitols in the country. It was constructed over a period

of 37 years, from 1866 to 1903, at a total cost of \$3.2 million. The state government of Kansas has been based in Topeka since the year that Kansas became a state, 1861. The first capital of Kansas was Fort Leavenworth, where territorial governor Andrew Reeder had his headquarters. Other state capitals during the territorial period were Shawnee Mission, Pawnee, Lecompton, Minneola, Leavenworth and Lawrence. Some of those towns served as the capital several times - the capital changed whenever the territorial leaders decided to move it. Kansas became a state January 29, 1861. In November of that year an election was held to decide on a capital and Topeka was selected over Lawrence and several other cities. In later years there were several attempts to move the capital to a more central location, but none came close to succeeding

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## State Flag

The Kansas flag consists of a dark blue field with the state seal in the center. A sunflower on a bar of twisted gold lies above the seal, and below the seal is the word "Kansas." The seal contains a landscape that includes a rising sun, representing the east; and a river and steamboat, representing commerce. In the foreground, a settler's cabin and a man plowing a field represent agriculture. A wagon train heads west and buffalo are seen fleeing from two Indians. Around the top of the seal is a cluster of 34 stars. The state motto appears above the stars.

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## State Flower

The following information is excerpted from the Kansas Statutes, Chapter 73, Article 18, Section 73-1801.

"Kansas has a native wild flower common throughout her borders, hardy and conspicuous, of definite, unvarying and striking shape, easily sketched, moulded, and carved, having armorial capacities, ideally adapted for artistic reproduction, with its strong, distinct disk and its golden circle of clear glowing rays -- a flower that a child can draw on a slate, a woman can work in silk, or a man can carve on stone or fashion in clay; and WHEREAS, This flower has to all Kansans a historic symbolism which speaks of frontier days, winding trails, pathless prairies, and is full of the life and glory of the past, the pride of the present, and richly emblematic of the majesty of a golden future, and is a flower which has given Kansas the world-wide name, "the sunflower state": THEREFORE:, Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas: That the helianthus or wild native sunflower is hereby made, designated and declared to be the state flower and floral emblem of the state of Kansas."

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## State Bird

Kansas school children chose the western meadow lark as the State Bird in 1925. The Kansas Audubon Society facilitated this contest in which the western meadow lark won over close competitors, the bobwhite quail, the cardinal, and the robin. The Kansas Legislature approved the western meadow lark (*Sturnella neglecta*) as the official state bird of Kansas in 1937.

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## State Motto

Kansas' state motto is "Ad astra per aspera"

Which means: To the stars through difficulties. This motto can be found on the state flag. It is located above the stars inside the state seal.

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State Tree

Chapter 318 Designating the Cottonwood Tree as the official state tree HOUSE BILL NO. 113 - AN ACT designating the cottonwood tree as the official state tree of Kansas. "WHEREAS, If the full truth were known, it might honestly be said that the successful growth of the cottonwood grove on the homestead was often the determining factor in the decision of the homesteader to "stick it out until he could prove up on his claim"; and WHEREAS the cottonwood tree can rightfully be called "the pioneer tree of Kansas"; Now THEREFORE, Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas: Section 1. That the tree be known as the cottonwood is hereby designated and declared to be the official tree of the state of Kansas. Sec. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book."

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State Animal

The most abundant grazing animal in North America was formerly the American Bison. One estimate of the original number of bison in North America ranged as high as 70 million animals. A single herd located southwest of what is now Dodge City, Kansas in 1871 was carefully estimated to have over 4 million members! To see anything like this today one would have to visit Africa to see the large herds of grazing animals which still remain there.

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State Song

The original title of "Home On the Range" was "My Western Home." Dr. Higley wrote the words in 1871 or 1872. There seem to be many different versions of this song around. Perhaps this is what the Kansas Legislature was concerned about when it wrote "...as originally written..." into the law. The words provided here are as they are written into law.

#### VERSE 1

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,  
Where the deer and the antelope play, Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the sky is not clouded all day.

#### CHORUS

A home, a home where the deer and the antelope play,

Where seldom is heard a discouraging word

And the sky is not clouded all day.

## VERSE 2

Oh, give me the gale of the Solomon vale,

Where life streams with buoyancy flow,

On the banks of the Beaver, where seldom if ever

Any poisonous herbage doth grow.

## VERSE 3

Oh, give me the land where the bright diamond sand

Throws its light from the glittering stream

Where glideth along the graceful white swan,

Like a maid in a heavenly dream.

## VERSE 4

I love the wild flowers in this bright land of ours;

I love too the wild curley's scream,

The bluffs and white rocks and antelope flocks

That graze on the hillsides so green.

## VERSE 5

How often at night, when the heavens are bright

With the light of the glittering stars,

Have I stood here amazed and asked as I gazed

If their glory exceeds this of ours.

#### VERSE 6

The air is so pure, the breezes so free,

The zephyrs so balmy and light,

I would not exchange my home here to range

Forever in azure so bright.

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